

Revelation 17

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

Here we find a description God's judgement upon religious Babylon as opposed to political Babylon: verses 1 to 7 describe religious Babylon, and verses 8 to 18 is the interpretation. With this in mind, we can clearly see that Revelation provides added information relating to the beginning of the Tribulation period before dealing with judgement upon Babylon. We should keep in mind that religious Babylon will only be the spiritual arm of the Antichrist system.

An angel gives John more information regarding the state of the Last Days World Church. Without pulling any punches, the false church is called "The Great Whore" by the angel. She has committed spiritual prostitution, by following Babylonian Mystery Religion rather than the purity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This religious system is none other than the Roman Catholic Church, who, without question started out as a true church of Christ, but corrupted herself by adopting paganism, idolatry and other abominable practices. It is likely that Roman Catholicism (if possible, in a more corrupt form) will become the state religion of the Antichrist system during the first days of the Tribulation.

The whore is said to sit upon many waters. This is descriptive of the fact that the system rules over multitudes of peoples and nations. This is expounded upon in verse 15.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

The whore is supported and admired by international statesmen. She has convinced the leaders of nations that she is a force to be reckoned with. Many politicians honour her by seeking advice and guidance. Kings, Presidents and Prime Ministers continue to kowtow to the pope of Rome. Politics and religion have always used each other to advance their own causes. Today, it is true to say that, our world leaders are infatuated with Rome.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

In his vision, John is carried away into a wilderness to see this Great Whore. The book of Revelation is prophetic insight into events that will occur at the end of earth's history. John is transported forward in time to see these events unfold, but it may be true to say that he is taken back in time here to see the foundation of all paganism. The "wilderness" might be symbolic of the post-Flood area where Nimrod built Babel, the mother of all false religion – religion, we might add, that was created in opposition to the Truth. While Babel isn't Babylon, we do know that the region it was built in became the Assyrian/Babylonian Empire.

She sits upon a scarlet coloured beast having seven heads and ten horns, the same Beast mentioned in Revelation 13. As stated above, the Roman Catholic Church will become the official religion of the Beast system. She will ride upon its power and authority, and the beast will use her to take control of the hearts and minds of the people. Who doubts the fact that her church is full to the brim with false and heretical doctrines, blasphemies against scripture and Christ, except those who are drunk with love for her?

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

He sees her clothed in purple and scarlet (the colours of priestcraft) and bedecked with gold, silver, pearls and jewels. John is describing the wealth of this organisation that calls herself a church of God. Not only is the Catholic Church the wealthiest organisation in the world today (it is impossible to put a figure on her colossal riches), but she hoards it while millions are dying with hunger in some of the poorest countries she rules over.

Not only is she idolatrous and heretical, but she also holds aloft the most offensive cup. This cup is the Sacrifice of the Mass – the worst of all blasphemies. Why? Because her chalice degrades the once and for all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. He said, “**It is finished!**” (John 19:30), but she declares, “It’s only just begun”. It is an offence to Heaven to suggest that her priests can change wine into the actual blood of our Saviour [transubstantiation]. The cup of the Lord was meant to be a blessing, but Rome turned it into a poisonous chalice which damns souls.

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

As plain as day John sees the name written on her brazen forehead. Actually it is several titles which describe her true nature.

1. Mystery ... Her foundation is paganism and other mystical religions of the ancient world instead of the Holy Scriptures.
2. Babylon the Great ... All false religions have their roots in the Babylonian cults of the ancient world, and the Roman Catholic Church is no different. Anything from Babylon is automatically at variance with God. It all finds its origin at the Tower of Babel, when all the world wanted to be one. Once Rome is destroyed, the Antichrist will indeed relocate the religious side of his kingdom to restored Babylon in Iraq. It is situated very close to the geographical centre of the Earth, so is ideally situated to control politics, commerce and religion.

3. The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth ... All who are a part of her, including all who sympathise with her, must accept her teachings and practices. She is the mother of all false churches and religions.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

She is seen with blood on her lips. We cannot ignore history on two very important levels. Firstly, Babylon has always been the enemy of truth and those who stand for it (Jeremiah 51:7; Isaiah 47:5).

Jeremiah 51:7 Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Isaiah 47:5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

Pagan religion has sought to destroy the truth. This is seen throughout Scripture (both Testaments). Secondly, the Vatican is responsible for some of the worst atrocities this world has ever seen. A quick reading of Foxe's Book of Martyrs will reveal this. Yes, her priests, bishops, and popes have slaughtered millions of innocent Christian people since the third century.

Was John repulsed by this vision? Did these details cause him to be angry at this false church? No! You see, there is a certain beauty of Rome that attracts so many to her. They know what she has done and what she is capable of, but still there is that fatal attraction. Any rotten door can look good with a coat of brightly coloured paint. Why do multitudes of Bible believing Christians see nothing wrong with Rome? It is simple; they admire her. Only a Heaven-sent revelation can remedy this. John was amazed by

what he saw, yet this should not be taken as approval, for it certainly seems that he was bewildered by what he saw.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

John was both amazed and baffled by the vision, so the angel now opens his eyes to see the true nature of the woman on the beast.

False religion, especially Roman Catholicism, is based upon 'mysteries'. These mysteries are placed above the teachings of Scripture. This is the reason why they can commit such atrocities and still claim to be worshippers of God. The angel is about to describe this false last days religion in detail. Notice that she is in league with the Antichrist political system. Whenever State and Religion have joined hands, persecution of true believers has resulted.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The power behind Roman Catholicism is Satan not the Lord Jesus Christ. The Beast (Antichrist) will be the earthly authority governing the Vatican. Some believe that the Vatican will control Europe. This is unlikely. Europe will go hand in hand with the church for a period, and will make her a State controlled religion. The world will be amazed at the sudden rise of Antichrist, and how quickly he unites the EU. and Catholicism together. It will appear like a miracle. Who will not wonder after the Political / Religious system? Finally, Roman Catholicism will have chosen evil incarnate as its head – this is what it has been gearing up to anyway.

The world, at this stage, will be focused upon the Antichrist. They will follow him wherever he leads, therefore, if he promotes religion, they will adhere to it also. Simply put, they will copy their hero.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

Rome sits on seven hills, or maybe it doesn't! Actually there are more than seven hills in Rome and the Vatican only sits on one of them. Here the Antichrist's religious arm will initially have its headquarters, that is, in Rome. Its foundation was laid in the 3rd Century by Constantine: each brick has been laid down by successive popes, and the final capstone will be the Antichrist himself. She will rule as the religious authority over Europe. That said, the "seven mountains" also refers to seven kingdoms as mentioned in the following verses rather than seven literal hills. If taken as literal, then the hills can only refer to Rome.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

Rome is also based on seven kingdoms. Five of these are ancient (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece). The one that "is" in John's day was Rome. The one yet to come is Europe (revised Roman Empire). Notice that the religious system of all these nations was 'mystery'. Rome has all the traits of the previous kingdoms.

The Antichrist kingdom will not last very long, for according to Scripture, it will last only for the 3½ years [42 months] of the second part of the Tribulation (Revelation 13:5).

Revelation 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

At first the Antichrist's Empire will be a continuation of the seven previous empires, but he will quickly establish his own. This is why he is called 'the eighth'. His kingdom will encapsulate all the characteristics of the previous empires, especially the Roman Empire, since it was the largest of them all. We are plainly told that he is doomed to perdition – the Lake of Fire.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

There are two possibilities here regarding Europe. (1) The ten original nations of the EU will have power with the Antichrist. (2) The European States will be reconstructed into ten regions with their own governing structures. The latter seems to be the most likely. When the members of the EU pass their power to the Antichrist, their supposed joint-power will be short lived. Europe is NOT united now, but will be for a time under the Beast. If the Antichrist reigns for 3½ years, we can see how quickly he will dominate the nations if they only have power with him for one hour.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

This verse describes the unity of the European Union. This means that there will be a centralised government in Europe. 'Power and strength' refers to the military, governmental and financial realms. The Beast will be the President of Europe, and national leaders will mindlessly cede their authority to him.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

It will be these nations that will determine to destroy Christ at His return at Armageddon. The military might of these nations will be mobilised against Him, but, the King of kings and Lord of lords is mightier than all their weaponry, for all He needs is the power of His word (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:16; 1 Timothy 6:15).

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

1 Timothy 6:15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Once again Satan will presume that he can dethrone God (read Isaiah 14:13-16).

Isaiah 14:13-16 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms.

He who called the universe into existence can certainly deal with the armies of the Beast.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

Notice that the whore is the spiritual power over a vast number of nations. What part of the world is free from her influence? Europe especially has been continually under her power.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

Religious Babylon will be stripped by the Antichrist after he has no more use for it. Once united under the control of the Antichrist, Europe will have no need for the Papacy, for the Beast will become its spiritual head instead. Right up until the end Roman Catholicism will have a semblance of Christianity, which the Beast will hate. The wealth of Rome will be removed. Her authority will quickly come to an end. The Antichrist will simply use the Great Whore to his own ends. The Vatican State will be utterly destroyed. This destruction of religious Babylon will take place around the middle of the Tribulation, for the sole object of worship will be the Beast. If this is correct, then Islam and other world religions must fall too.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

It is God who inspires the Antichrist to destroy Rome! How much He must detest that evil system! It has continued to be in opposition to all the doctrines of Christ. The unification of Europe is to this end also. It all fulfils the prophecies laid out centuries before.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The woman is the Great City. There is only one great city that has ruled over Europe – that is Rome. It has been Vatican State that has influenced countless millions since the fall of the Roman Empire. The angel leaves us with no alternative for identifying this Great Whore – Religious system.

Note: Some may object to Rome being identified as the main character described in this chapter. We could over-simplify this

part of Revelation, as several commentators do, and make it to be a unification of all false religion. We must keep in mind, though, that John knew nothing of Islam, Mormonism or other modern religions, but he was fully aware of the religion of Rome, the empire that ruled the world he lived in. It is very obvious that the Lord Himself identified Rome as the Great Whore, which includes the religious aspect too. The Roman Catholic Church became 'The Holy Roman Empire' and adopted many of the practices, titles and images of Imperial Rome. Even a brief study of the history of the Papacy will confirm this.